

2. Background Considerations

The Applicant is aware that for many northern residents, and particularly native people, the type and extent of economic development thus far experienced in the territorial North has brought relatively limited measurable or on-going benefit. Given this experience, it is understandable that there is mixed feeling toward the pipeline project, and that there is concern expressed over the effect construction of the pipeline will have on the study region and on its natural resources. It is not surprising that many northern residents perceive the land as a familiar form of insurance against possible future insecurity. Their relationship with the land has historically been certain and confident; the development of resources, in large measure, is often perceived as involving great uncertainties. 4-10

This relationship between man and the land is common to all human groups. It is, however, particularly marked in the North.

2.1 Historical Experience With Development

The people in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory began to lose their economic self-sufficiency and to become increasingly dependent upon inputs from beyond their society following the arrival of the explorers, the fur traders and the whalers.

Prior to the end of the first quarter of this century, native residents were able to continue to use their historic skills to capture the resources which they could exchange for the goods desired from outside. However, the acceleration of the rate of change over the last one or two generations has created a new social and economic environment, and it is not likely that the direction of change could be reversed, even if most northern residents wished it.

The construction and other projects which were carried on in the study region, prior to the more recent petroleum industry activities, included mining ventures, the construction of the DEW line, the construction of such regional service type communities as Inuvik and other more minor undertakings. Experience with these projects provides a background of knowledge which is instructive in terms of the planning of the construction and operation phases of the proposed pipeline.

The earlier construction projects generated sporadic employment for native Northerners. This reinforced the movement from isolated hunting camps to an employment way of life in larger settlements dominated by non-natives. It confirmed, for an increasing number of native Northerners, the end of one lifestyle and the beginning of another.

Implicit in this fundamental locational and socio-economic change was that there could be no reversion to the self-sufficient economy of the past: the economy of the North would have to continue to grow on the basis of the economic development of the natural resources of the region; the social environment would have to make the relevant adaptations.

Another effect of the short-term employment was a significant increase in cash income that became available to local wage earners. A standard of living was achieved which could not be maintained when the employment ended. Much of the employment was short-lived and during this period many of the people, consistent with their needs and their cultural heritage, spent their earnings as fast as they received them. Savings programs would have spread the economic benefit of this short-term employment over a longer period of time. But two factors militated against such accumulations of capital. In the first instance, most native people were not oriented toward 4-4

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the saving of money for some future and undefined purpose -- it was foreign to their experience and cultural perceptions. In the second instance, the institutional mechanisms were not in a position to facilitate a locally-based savings program. Some people did, in fact, open accounts in chartered banks based in southern Canada and some invested in capital equipment related to their traditional pursuits of hunting and fishing, but the hard fact is that in most cases short-term wage employment created new material wants and failed to provide the means of continuing to satisfy them.

One positive result of short-term employment opportunities, however, was that some of the people gained new skills that equipped them for continuing wage employment, chiefly as carpenters and as operators of heavy vehicles and equipment.

Unfortunately, the opportunity for continuing to utilize these skills proved to be limited or, especially in the smaller settlements, non-existent. And the acquisition of such skills did not, of itself, result in the mobility of the workers: family and community ties, and a sense of uncertainty and unfamiliarity with other areas and social environments, conspired to hold the semi-skilled workers in their home settlements. Some individuals and families did move but, after a period in a new settlement, they often returned to their home community and brought reports that served to further restrain mobility. As a consequence, relatively few people who acquired skills actually moved to communities in northern or southern Canada where the skills could be utilized or merchandised.

The social and economic changes that evolved over past decades as a response to these experiences have profound implications with respect to recruitment, training and employment, community relationships throughout the study region and to the attitude of Northerners to proposed developments.

2.2 Present Attitudes of Northern Residents Toward the Pipeline

Regional interest in the pipeline seems to largely focus on the jobs and other economic opportunities it represents for northern residents and, in particular, the native people living in the study area. But the Applicant has observed a parallel uncertainty as to the implications the pipeline will have in terms of traditional pursuits and the altering of social characteristics in the communities that will be affected.

Obviously no single, definable attitude can be isolated or cited. This is true of native people, and of non-natives who are permanently resident in the region.

The Applicant is aware that many people have a normal anxiety related to the prospect of change -- of altering the known for the new and the unknown. Their historical experiences encourage a doubt in the minds of some native people as to whether the commitment that they will gain employment will, in fact, be honored. And some of the people are concerned as to the social change that they expect to result from the increased activity, income and population.

This attitude of residents may be inseparable from a deeply held conviction that southern involvement in economic activity based in the North will always imply only a short-term benefit, that Southerners will take out resources and the residents will receive limited continuing benefits.

The Applicant believes that this perception fails to give full weight to the economic scope of a project of the magnitude of the pipeline construction and operation and to the future continuing developments that will result. But the Applicant realizes that it is difficult for anybody to

